



The effects of extensive listening on Vietnamese students' listening skills

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Abstract: *University students in Vietnam do not have enough time to practise their listening inside the classroom. Outside the classroom, they do not have chance to practice it. To supplement time constraint in the classroom, extensive listening was employed to assist students to develop their listening skills. The study aims to investigate whether extensive listening ameliorates students' listening proficiency. Two groups of students from two intact classes: the control group (n = 32) and the experimental group (n = 32) were selected. Before the semester started, all students sat for the pre-listening test. After that, students in the experimental group were advised to listen to fifteen suggested sound files with one file for each week. They were also instructed some listening strategies to self-practise at home while students in the control group did not do any listening tasks at home. After 15 weeks, students in both groups took the post-listening test. The post-interview was conducted to explore how students practiced their listening out of school. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test. Some students in the experimental group reported that they practised listening many times and tried to learn as much vocabulary as possible.*

Keywords: *Extensive listening; Listening skills; Vietnamese students' listening skills*

INTRODUCTION

English learners in Vietnam did not have chance to practise English outside the classroom because English is a foreign language there. Inside the classroom due to the time constraint, teachers did not have enough time for students to practise their skills (Nguyen, 2013). As a result, university graduates are not able to communicate after many years of learning English (Le, 2013). To supplement the time constraint in the classroom, the extensive project was set up so that students in this current study could practise some listening beyond the classroom.

Extensive listening has attracted many teachers, educators, linguists as well as EFL learners (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2014; Chang & Millett, 2016; Mayora, 2017). Many scholars have promoted the practice of extensive listening to improve students' listening fluency (Chang & Millett, 2016; Renandya & Farrell, 2010). Ivone and Renandya (2019) believe that extensive listening not only improves students' listening skills but also progresses students' overall language skills. However, not many studies have been conducted to figure out whether the extensive listening has resulted in the improvement of listening or not. The study aims to investigate the process and product of extensive listening to see whether the extensive listening has any effects on students' listening skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Krashen (1985) supposed that language learners acquire language through comprehensive input. Krashen's (1985) theory is criticised by a number of scholars for its testing ability (McLaughlin, 1987; White, 1987), overemphasis on input without acknowledging other activities such as output (Swain, 1995), and interaction (Long, 1996). However, there is no denying that language input is a source for language learning. One of the best ways of exposing students to language input is through listening (Harmer, 2003). Ivone and Renandya (2019) state that extensive listening is one of the input that students could employ to improve their listening skills. According to Renandya and Farrell (2010) extensive listening is "all types of listening activities that allow learners to receive a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input" (p.56). Ewert and Mahan (2011) characterise extensive listening as understandable language, enjoyable materials to attract students' attention, students' free selectivity.

There are some differences between extensive listening and intensive listening. Ewert and Mahan (2012) point out the differences between extensive listening and intensive listening. While extensive listening is to develop fluency by getting information and enjoying listening, the intensive one is to improve the accuracy by focusing on answering the questions. Students can choose their own materials in extensive listening whereas teachers choose them for intensive listening. Then, there are a number of benefits of extensive listening (Ivone & Renandya, 2019). Renandya and Jacobs (2016) conclude that extensive listening can improve student capacity to deal with speech rate, word recognition, bottom-up listening skills, familiarity with spoken texts, and English proficiency. Ivone and Renandya (2019) emphasize that extensive listening can expose language learners to a large amount of language input. Language learners become more fluent and automatic in recognition of spoken texts because they practice their listening frequently and repeatedly and have more exposure to language input (Krashen, 1985). Besides, language learners can enjoy fun because they could choose their own topics. In addition, extensive listening is flexible because it can be done beyond the classroom; therefore, it can foster learner independence.

Ivone and Renandya (2019) also classify extensive listening into five different sub-categories: listening only, active listening (e.g. reading about while listening), reading while listening, listening and viewing (videos), combined listening, reading, and viewing. Renandya and Jacobs (2016) add that materials should be within students' level and listening and reading should be encouraged to practice simultaneously because they explained L2 learners at low levels are not able to recognize the words that they have already studied.

Some studies have investigated student experiences on extensive listening online or on campus. Widodo and Rozak (2016) found that Indonesian students from a private university chose the videos according to their culture and identity. These students also had to discuss after watching a video together. They reported that they tried to watch the videos five to six times and collaborate with each other to practise their listening. They perceived that their listening skills improved; however, the study did not measure the effects of the extensive listening. Similarly, Absalom and Rizzi (2008) compared student experiences between two Australian groups studying Italian: reading and listening online. The study figured out that the

listening group engaged with the topic and understood the content better than the reading group because the reading group only scanned the text to find the answer as soon as possible. All the students in the listening groups were able to summarize the topic of the first week's recording while the reading group only retained one or two facts about the topic of the first week. However, the study did not investigate students' progress in their listening skills or reading comprehension. O' Bryan and Hegelheimer (2007) investigated the use of podcasting such as songs, or short conversations to improve students' listening skills in an English course at a university in the USA. Both teachers and students were interviewed after the course. The teacher stated that listening to songs or conversations outside the classroom could supplement class time and more input for students to practise their listening skills. Students positively evaluated podcasts as positive component of the course. Anusienė and Kavaliauskienė (2009) reported that tertiary students in Lithuania reported that podcasts could personalize students' listening pace, and students found it novel and motivated to practise listening beyond the class. The study suggested the combination between online listening and physical classes would be beneficial for students. Alm (2013) examined 28 students studying German at a university in New Zealand. These students were asked to record their podcasts on a blog. The findings showed that they preferred their personal choice of the topics, and blog writing motivated them to write more because of the audience presence. While listening to the podcasts, they played, paused and replayed many times to understand the recordings more.

Furthermore, a number of studies (Chang & Millett, 2013, 2016) have been examined the effects of extensive listening on students' listening skills, reading skills and speaking skills. Chang and Millett (2013) found that the extensive reading group did not progress in their listening skills while the listening and reading group improved significantly in the post-listening test compared to the listening only group. Chang and Millett (2016) also added that there was a correlation between the number of the graded-books that students extensively listened to with their listening improvement. However, the study did not clarify how these students practised with their audio books and one book a week was too much for many students to complete. Chang, Millett, and Renandya (2019) compared three different groups: listening only, reading only and listening and reading. The result showed that the listening and reading group outperformed the other two groups.

The above studies have found that extensive listening individualized students listening progress, progressed students' listening skills compared the extensive reading group only. However, a little is known about the extensive group and the group without extensive listening. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gaps by proposing two research questions as follows;

1. *What are the effects of extensive listening practice on students' listening skills?*
2. *How do students experience extensive listening?*

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a pre-test, a post-test to measure the effects of the extensive listening on students' listening skills. A self-checklist was delivered

before the extensive listening project so that students could record their daily listening practice. In addition, the experimental group were also trained some listening strategies (more description is below). Students in both control and experimental group sat for pre-and post-tests. Ten students from the control group were interviewed to see how they had practiced their listening during the extensive listening project.

The study had 64 non-English major students from a university in Vietnam. These students were from two intact classes, and they studied English as a foreign language. Students from one class were majored in banking and the others were majored in accounting. They were second-year students with the age of 20 – 21. These two classes were selected as a control group and an experimental group. The control group had 32 students with 6 males and 26 females while the experimental group had 32 students with 10 males and 22 females. These students took the pre-test (see more detailed description about the test below) before the project started. The average test scores of the control group was 7.0 (SD = 2.5) over 25 questions, and the average test cores of the experimental group was 7.5 (SD = 2.7). The independent t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the control group and the experimental group because the sig. value is .71, which is much higher than .05. This means that before students participated in the extensive listening project, they had the same level of listening skills. The students in these two classes had to study English as a compulsory subject and had to take and pass the same exam in order to graduate. Their English level was about elementary. Each week, they had to study one English section in class which is about 135 minutes each. Both classes were taught by the same teacher. Students had to take part in the listening test for 30 minutes at the end of the semester as a part of the assessment. Both classes were taught by the same teacher.

Most of the students were from remote areas and did not know many English materials to access. Besides, it is a demanding and time - consuming job when students did not know their levels and sources. In addition, if the selected materials were difficult, they might feel discouraged to continue. In constrast, if the materials were too simple, there was nothing new for them to make progress. On reflection, we decided to suggest 15 recordings with 15 different topics so that they could listen to. All the recordings were from www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish and were at elementary level. All the transcripts were analysed using the website ‘Compleat Lexical Tutor’ (<https://lextutor.ca/vp/eng/>) to check their vocabulary range. The vocabulary from the recordings is in the range of first 2000 words in English and 85% of the words are within first 1000 words. The duration for each recording is from 4 to 7 minutes. Each recording has about 600 – 800 words. The recordings are at the student level (elementary) because some scholars (P. Nation, 2007; Renandya & Jacobs, 2016; Rost, 2002) recommend that input for extensive listening should be within student level so that they could understand well and listen with comfort.

Preliminary English Tests (PET) (University of Cambridge, 2008) used to test pre-intermediate to intermediate students by university of Cambridge were employed for the pre-test and post-test. This test was selected because by the end of the semester, students had to take a similar test to get their scores as a part of their assessment. The PET listening test consists of 25 questions in four parts and time allotted is approximately 30 minutes. This is a standardized test by the

University of Cambridge to test student English ability internationally. It is recognized by many organizations in the world. Each test has four parts. Part 1 has 7 multiple-choice picture questions. Part 1 aims to examine students' listening for detailed or specific information with seven questions using pictures. Part 2 has six multiple-choice questions to check, detailed meaning, distinguishing main and second points. Part 3 has six gaps to fill with specific meaning. Part 4 has six true/false or yes/no questions to identify speakers' attitudes and feelings.

Before the project started, all students were explained clearly about the objectives of extensive listening project, and were informed about how data would be collected and what would be done with their information. The students from the control group were offered extensive listening strategy training after the post-test. After that, all students took the pre-test. Then, students in the experimental group were trained to practise extensive listening some strategies. First, students were advised to listen the recording without looking at the transcript to try to understand the meaning because according to Vandergrift (1999) good listeners are able to formulate a whole picture of what other people are trying to convey and relate to their knowledge and the world and predict the unknown words first if there are new words to them. Although the recording is at student listening level, there might be a few new words that they could guess from the context. If the students did not understand well after their first listening, they were suggested to listen to the recording the second time and guess the meaning of some words they might not know if there is any. After that, they were recommended to listen to the recording for the third time and looked at the transcript if necessary as P. Nation (2007) suggested after the meaning focussed activities, language learners should be exposed to target language items deliberately to raise their awareness or consciousness before supporting them to produce some output. Finally, students listened without looking at the transcript to check whether they could recognize all of the words or not because Renandya and Jacobs (2016) point out that low language learners do not recognize the spoken form of a word although they know its meaning. After students did their extensive listening, they were advised to tick on the checklist what they had already listened to on that day.

Each week, students practised their extensive listening and recorded their practice in the checklist. After 15 weeks, students sat for the post-test (the description of the post-test was below). After that, interviews were conducted with 10 students from the experimental group to examine how often they practised listening and what they perceived their progress after 15-week extensive listening practice which lasted in about 4 months because there were two-week holidays during that term. As students reported in the checklist, three students completed all the activities (15 recordings in 15 weeks). The majority of the students (22) in the experimental groups listened from 10 to 14 weeks. However, two students only completed four-week extensive listening. The analysis was not excluded any students although some of them did not complete all the listening activities. After students completed the post-test, ten students in the experimental group or extensive listening groups were asked for the interview. The first ten students in the list were asked whether they consented to participate in the interview. However, two students did not want to participate in the interview, so two more students in the list were asked, and they agreed to participate. These students voluntarily participated in the

unstructured interview. All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese so that students could freely express their opinion. Although the interviewer was the teacher who taught in the class, these students were advised to speak freely before the interview so that they felt as much comfortable as possible. All the interviews were transcribed. The theme analysis was employed for the student practice of extensive listening.

All the data were analysed with SPSS Statistics software (version 25). The Cronbach Alpha was used to examine the internal reliability between the pre- and post-tests. After that, all the test scores were tested using independent t-tests between two groups: control group and experimental group to see whether the difference is statistically significant or not. The paired t-tests were employed to check whether the change in each group was significant before the project and after the project. The Pearson correlation analysis was used to see whether there was a correlation between the number of tasks that students completed with their post-test scores.

FINDINGS

To answer the first research question about the effect of the extensive listening on student listening skills, the pre-test and post-test scores were employed. First, the Cronbach's Alpha test was tested to see whether the test scores were reliable or not. The result showed that the reliabilities for the pre-test and post-test were satisfactory (Cronbach's Alpha = .733). The paired-samples t-tests were used to analyse whether there were any significant changes within each group from the pre-test to the post-test. The results from the paired samples t-test indicate that both of the groups showed statistically significant differences between the pre-test and the post-test. In terms of the control group, the test scores increased .72 from the pre-test (M = 6.97, SD = 2.53) to the post test (M = 7.69, SD = 2.79) because the P value = .018 which is much lower than .05. Regarding to the experimental group, there was a significant increase in their test scores from the pre-test (M = 7.5, SD = 2.7) to the post-test (M=10.3, SD = 3.3). The p value = .01 which is much lower than .05. The results could be explained that after more than four months of study, both groups showed progress in terms of their listening skills. The detailed score for each individual is presented in **Figure 1** for the control group and in **Figure 2** for the experimental group.

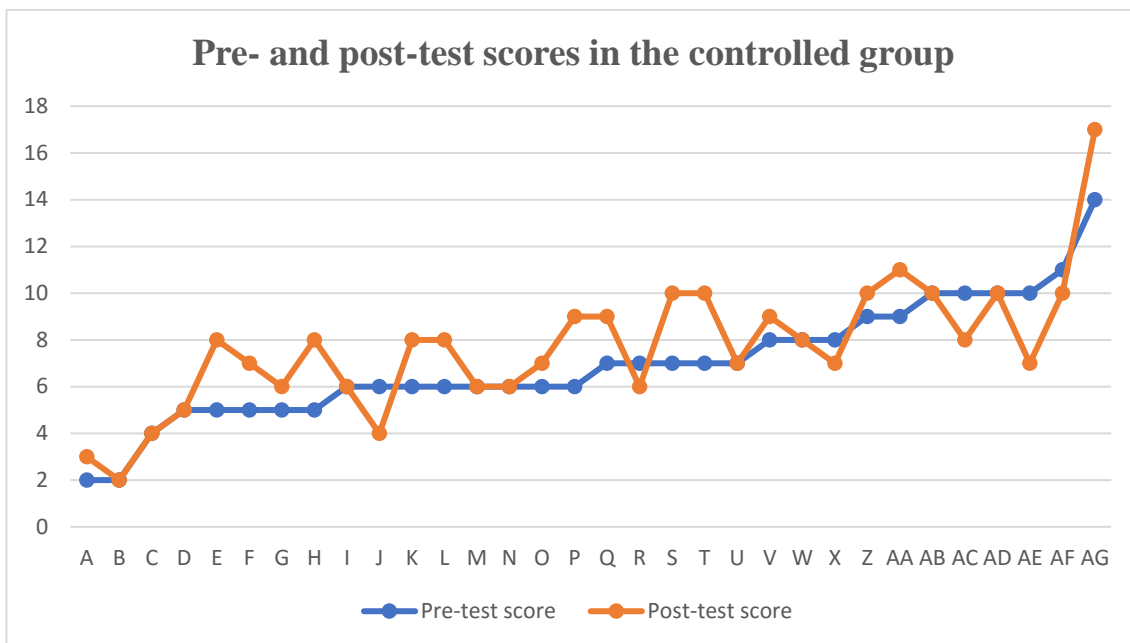


Figure 1. Pre- and post-test scores in the control group

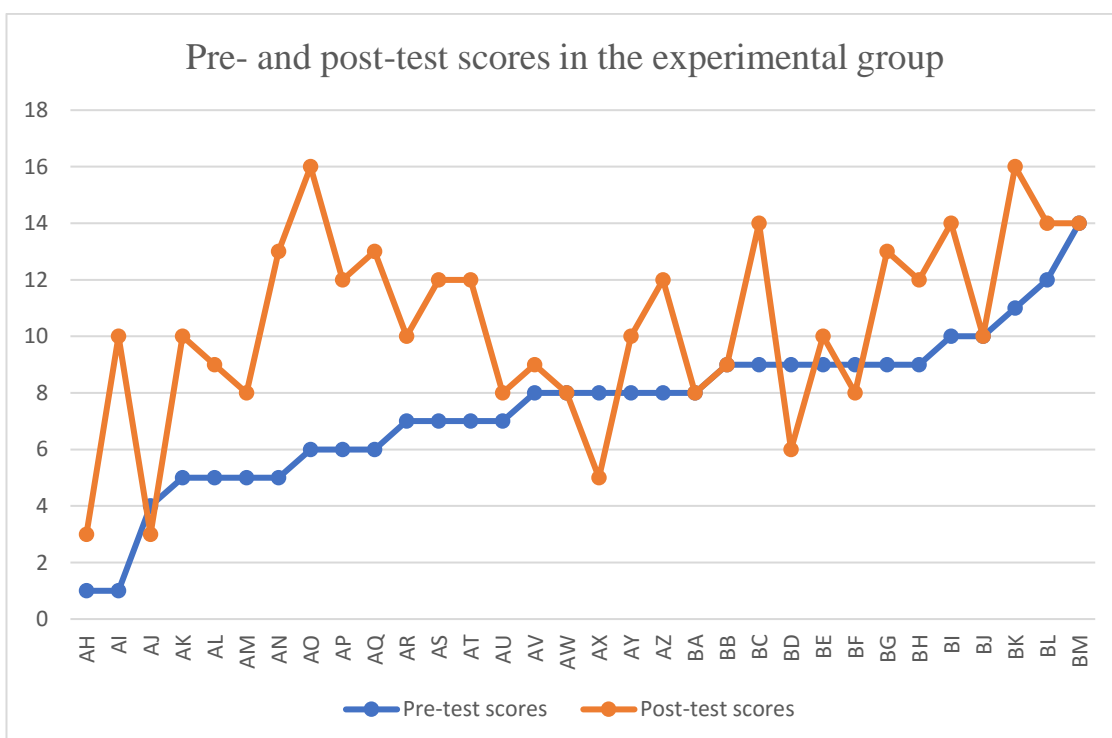


Figure 2. Pre- and post-test scores in the experimental group

The independent t-tests were used to check whether there were any differences between the controlled group and the experimental group. The results from the Table 1 showed that the experimental group experienced a significant increase in their test scores from 7.5 in the pre-test to 10.3 out of 25 questions in the post-test while the control group only increased by .7 in their test scores.

Independent-t test results indicate that the difference is statistically significant between the pre-test and the post-test with the p-value = .001 which is much lower than .05. The result suggested that the extensive listening resulted in the progress in student listening skills, and the extensive listening group outperformed the control group.

Table 1. *Pre-test and post-test scores*

Group	Pre-test			Post-test		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	32	7.0	2.53	32	7.7	2.8
Experimental group	32	7.5	2.75	32	10.3	3.3

To further examine whether there was a correlation between the number of tasks that students completed their extensive listening with their final test scores, the Pearson correlation test was employed. The result showed that there was a strong correlation between the number of extensive listening tasks that students completed with the post-test scores (sig. 2-tailed = .000). The Pearson correlation is .674, which means that there was a positive correlation between the number of extensive listening sections and the post-test scores. In other words, the more extensive listening tasks students in the experimental group completed, the higher their post-test scores they got.

To answer the second research questions about how students practiced their listening skills during the extensive listening project, the post-interviews with ten students from the experimental group were used. The following themes emerged from the post-interview.

Listening to the recordings more than once

As the students were advised to listen to the recordings before they could open the transcript. They reported that they tried to listen to the recordings more than once. Averagely they listened to the recording 1 to 2 times to get the general information before they tried to figure out the meaning of some unknown words. Some of the students tried to listen for the first time to try to guess the meaning.

I often listened to it once or twice before looking at the transcript
(students AR - 10, BI-11).

However, one student treated the recordings differently according to their difficult level.

It was not the same because I listened to each recording differently.
With difficult recordings, I listened more times than the easier ones
(student AY-12).

If that recording was too long, I could not listen to many times, I only listened once (student AM-12).

Alm (2013) also found that while students practiced their extensive listening, they replayed many times to comprehend the recordings better. Some students from the experimental group also did the same when they listened to the recording more than once to get better understanding. During the listening process, students used listening strategies to overcome their difficulties by guessing the meaning from the context before they actually read the transcript and looked up the vocabulary. However, some of them treated their recordings according to the tasks they had to complete. Some of them only looked up the dictionary when they had some incorrect answers.

Guessing the meaning while listening

Yes, usually I could not understand all the words, so I had to guess the meaning (student BI)

If the exercise was filling the gap with words, I would not use the listening strategies, but listen to the word to fill in the blanks. However, if the listening was to listen and write, I would try my best to understand the recording by guessing the meaning overall (student AR).

I guessed the meaning of the unknown words (student AY).

If they could figure out the meaning of the word or have the correct answer, they would not check the dictionary.

It depended on the situation. If I could guess the meaning, I would not check up the dictionary (student AL).

I would do the exercises as I thought. After that I checked the answer key, if there is a wrong answer, I would look up the dictionary (student AK).

During the process of extensive listening, although the instructor did not ask students to listen to music or watch movies, some of the students practiced extensive listening by listening to music or watch movies.

Extensive listening practice outside the suggested works

I often watched films or listen to music (student AR).

In the evening, I often accessed the internet to listen to music or watched films (student AO).

I often listened to music or watched movies (student AY).

[I] usually listened to music on the internet or on Facebook or some short interesting films (student BI).

I often listened to music and watched films in English (student AL).

Perceived improvement

Some students perceived that their listening skills and vocabulary had progressed after extensive listening project. One student (AO) who completed all

the tasks in 15 weeks reported that her listening skills progressed. The post-test showed that his listening score increased from 6 to 16. Her improvement was much more than other students, and she was an outlier in this group. Similarly, the student – AL also reported that he improved his listening skills. The result also confirmed his opinion.

My listening skills had improved because I think I practiced listening a lot (student AL).

After 15 shifts, I think my vocabulary improved significantly (student AO).

Students' perception is consistent with their test score progress. Student AV stated that his listening only improved a little. The post-listening test indicated that his score did not improve much. He scored 9 in the post-test compared to 8 in the pre-test. In fact, he only completed four out of 15 extensive listening activities.

My listening skills improved a little (student AV)

Usefulness

One student perceived usefulness while engaging the extensive listening

Because it gave us some knowledge and information (student AY-12)

Although one student perceived that her vocabulary had developed, he supposed that her listening skills had not progressed. One student reported that extensive listening was a good chance for him to remember the word that he learnt in the past and did not use it. One student stated that this activity is a reminder for him to study vocabulary.

My vocabulary had improved but my listening skills have not improved much (student AK).

Because these topics has increased my vocabulary. ... because some words we studied but did not use, but in the recording, there were these words (student BI).

My vocabulary has been improved. Before, I had been very lazy to study vocabulary (student AL).

However, during the process of extensive listening, students also had some difficulties such as speed and unfamiliar topics.

The speed was not very fast but the accent. Speakers spoke with their natural accent, which was very difficult to understand (student AR).

But some topics are rather difficult. For example, the topic about championship, there were some specific words which were very difficult for us (student AR).

Yes, I found some topics very interesting, but some topics were difficult and rather long (student AL).

In summary, both groups showed significant increase in their test scores between the pre- and post-tests. In addition, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test. Besides, there was a correlation between the number of extensive listening tasks that the students in the experimental group completed with their test scores. Some students from the experimental group reported that they followed some steps advised at the beginning of the project and practiced listening extensively by listening to music, or watching movies. Some students perceived their progress in listening skills and new words.

DISCUSSION

Firstly, both groups (control and experimental group) showed their progress in their listening skills through the pre-test and post-test scores. However, the experimental group outperformed the control group. The independent t-test indicated the difference between the meaning scores between the control group and the experimental group is statistically significant. Some students in the post-interview also reported that they practiced extensive listening activities outside the classroom. The results suggested that extensive listening outside the classroom enabled students to progress their language skills more than the students who did not participate in the EL activities. The result might suggest that when students had exposure to the language input (Krashen, 1985), they can improve their language skills. Similarly, previous studies found that the extensive listening groups outperformed the reading groups or the reading and listening group scored much higher than the listening only or the reading only group (Chang & Millett, 2013; Chang et al., 2019).

Secondly, there was a correlation between the number of listening activities that students completed with their test scores. The more extensive listening activities the students in the experimental group finished, the better their listening scores were. The results were supported by the students in the post-interview who stated that they practiced their listening and perceived their listening skills and vocabulary improved after the extensive listening project. The result confirmed the findings from previous study by Chang and Millett (2016) that there was a correlation between the number of books students listened to and their progress. The results suggest that when students have more exposure to spoken language input, their listening skills have improved.

Thirdly, as a few students reported that they practiced repeatedly many times. This likely enables them to improve their language skills. This is supported by the result from Chang et al. (2019) that repeated activities could improve students listening comprehension. This is similar to I. S. Nation and Newton (2008)'s argument that repeated practice could prepare and support later activities. When language learners practiced speaking more than three time, they became more fluent. students became more fluent when they exposed to the spoken language repeatedly.

Fourthly, some students in this current study perceived that they had improved their vocabulary and listening skills. It is similar to the study by Pamuji, Waring, and Kurniawan (2019) that students perceived lexical progress when they routinely practiced. Meier (2015) reviewed many studies in extensive listening and found that extensive listening could accidently developed students' vocabulary

when they had some exposure to language input. Masrai (2020) also concluded that students developed their aural lexical knowledge when they watched movies. The results from previous studies confirmed that extensive listening could progress students' lexical knowledge when they had exposure to language input.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, it is clear from the result that both groups had some kinds of improvement after the course. However, the students having extensive practice scored higher than the those who did not have. It is likely that the extensive listening activities might contribute to their listening progress. As students reported the extensive practice enabled students to have supplementary practice outside the classroom. The students also practised many times to understand the recordings as suggested by the teacher.

The study has many pedagogical implications. First, students should be encouraged to do extensive listening outside the classroom to enable them to have more language input. As Chang et al. (2019) suggested that students should be encouraged to do more extensive listening outside the classroom so that they could develop their aural vocabulary knowledge and improve their vocabulary at the same time. Second, students should be trained some strategies while doing their extensive listening to enable students to focus on the meaning first before orienting students to some focus on language. Third, it might be useful when students are suggested a number of the topics so that they can choose the topics that they are interested in to avoid some reluctances at first.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study has some limitations. First, the study did not interview students before the extensive listening project. It is possible that some students might do some extensive listening by listening to music or watching movies outside the classroom before the project. Besides, it also did not interview the students in the control group after the extensive project. It is possible that some of the students in the control group also practised some kinds of extensive listening outside the classroom such as listening to music or watching movies as students in the experimental group. In addition, the extensive project only investigated a small number of the students within a university; therefore, it can not be generalised for every context. More research is needed to examine whether extensive listening could progress students' listening in a larger scale.

In closing, the study suggested that the extensive listening group could progress their listening skills much more than the control group, and there was a correlation between the number of extensive listening tasks that the students in the experimental group completed with their test scores. Besides, extensive listening enables students to have more language input outside the classroom, and has a chance to have more listening practice. The study calls for applying more extensive listening practice to benefit foreign language students.

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